

OFFSET CREDITS

Environmental Work Group
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Basic tenets:

- The starting point for offsets is sustainable safe yield: under the Water Management Act DEP may not permit withdrawals that exceed the safe yield of the water source (basin).
- Water efficiency will help to keep towns' use below their baseline.
- Some conservation measures (*i.e.*, bylaws limiting lawns and impervious cover; loam requirements) may be credited on the "soft credit" side," but are not technically offsets.
- Measures must be reasonably likely to achieve the required offset for the increase over baseline (see spread sheet attached) and onus on water supplier to demonstrate this.
 - 80% of increase must be documented offset measures; and
 - 20% of increase may be softer credits for measures that are more difficult to account for, or which primarily reduce demand.
- Water conservation actions to bring a community into compliance with performance standards in its water withdrawal permit are not eligible for credits.
- Interbasin transfers are not eligible for credit.
- A multiplier might be given for actions that return clean water to highly stressed sub-basins during the summer/put water back in the ground above withdrawal point.
- Offset plan must be stamped by a PE or certified by a consultant as reasonably likely to achieve required offset.
- Out-of-basin communities can perform or fund offsets in the basin of water origin if high or medium stressed
- An accurate offset accounting system is essential, and should be overseen by a review committee and have annual reporting.
- Funding mechanism(s) of offset program should be specified.
- Offset plans operate in 5-year blocks, while can be amended, must always achieve 80% offset measures.